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CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,  
CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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*O sanctas gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis*

*Numina ! — — — — —* Juv.



IRTU is almost the only instance, in which the appearance of literary knowledge is affected in the present age ; and our persons of rank acquire just enough scholarship to qualify themselves for *Connoisseurs*. These sort of students become sufficiently acquainted with the customs of the ancients, to learn the least interesting particulars concerning them. They can distinguish a *Tiberius* from a *Trajan*, know the *Panttheon* from the *Amphitheatre*, and can explain the difference between the *prætecta* and the *tunica* : which (only supposing the [present times to have elapsed some hundred years) is just as deep knowledge as if

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some future antiquarian should discover the difference between a *Carolus* and an *Anna*, or *St. Paul's* church and *Drury-Lane* playhouse, or a full-trimmed suit and a *French* frock.

BUT the full display of modern polite learning is exhibited in the decorations of parks, gardens, &c. and centered in that important monosyllable, *Taste*. *Taste* comprehends the whole circle of the polite arts, and sheds its influence on every lawn, avenue, grass-plot, and parterre. *Taste* has peopled the walks and gardens of the great with more numerous inhabitants than the ancient Satyrs, Fauns and Dryads. While infidelity has expunged the Christian Theology from our creed, *Taste* has introduced the heathen Mythology into our gardens. If a pond is dug, *Neptune*, at the command of *Taste*, emerges from the basin, and presides in the middle; or if a vista is cut through a grove, it must be terminated by a *Flora* or an *Apollo*. As the ancients held that every spot of ground had its guardian Genius, and that woodland deities were pegged in the knotty entrails of every tree, so in the gardens laid out by modern *Taste* every walk is peopled with gods and goddesses, and every corner of it has its tutelar-deity. Temples are erected to all the train of gods and goddesses mentioned in *Homer* or *Ovid*, which edifices as well as their several statues are adorned with *Latin* or *Greek* inscriptions; while the learned owner wonders at his own surprising stock of literature, which he sees drawn out at large before him, like the whole knowledge of an apothecary inscribed upon his gallipots.

THESE persons of *Taste* may be considered as a sort of learned idolaters, since they may be almost said to adore these graven images, and are quite enthusiastic in their veneration  
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of them. The following letter may possibly give them some offence; but as I have myself no extravagant fondness for a *Jupiter Tonans* or a *Belvidere Apollo*, I heartily wish the scheme proposed by my correspondent may take place, though it should reduce the price of heathen godheads.

To Mr. TOWN.

S I R,

**A**T a time when all wise heads are considering of ways and means to raise taxes, that may prove the least oppressive to indigence, and most effectually restrictive of luxury, permit me to propose (as a supplement to the thoughts of one of your correspondents on this subject) a national tax upon Gods.

IT is a strange but an undeniable truth, Mr. Town, that if you and I were to travel through *England*, and to visit the citizen in his country box, the nobleman at his seat, the esquire at the hall-house, and even the divine at his parsonage, we should find the gardens, avenues, and groves, belonging to each mansion, stuffed and ornamented with Heathen Gods.

IN the present declining state of our established religion, I almost tremble to consider what may be the consequences of these ready-made deities. Far be it from me to suppose that the great and the rich will worship any God whatsoever, but still I am induced to fear that the poor and the vulgar, when they find all other worship ridiculed and laid aside, may foolishly take to these molten images, and adore every leaden godhead they can find. If a tax on wheels has put down some hundreds of coaches, by a parity of reason, a tax upon gods may pull down an equal, if not a greater number

number of statues. I would also offer another proposal; which is this: That an oak be immediately planted, wherever a statue has been taken away, by which means those vast woods, which of late years have been cut down in *England*, to supply the immediate necessities of the illustrious *Arthurites* in *St. James's-street*, may be in some measure supplied to future generations.

AMONG our present taxes some of them fall upon branches of splendor not totally luxurious. Wheel carriages may be necessary: want of health or lameness of limbs may require them: but what necessities can we pretend for statues in our gardens, *Penates* in our libraries, and *Lares* on every chimney-piece? I have remarked many wild whims of this kind, that have appeared submissions, if not attachments, to idolatry. A gentleman of my acquaintance has destroyed his chapel, merely because he could not put up statues in it, and has filled his garden with every god, that can be found in *Spence's Polymetis*: Another of my friends, after having placed a *Belvidere Apollo* very conspicuously and naked upon the top of a mount, has erected an Obelisk to the Sun: and this expence he has not put himself to for the beauty of the Obelisk, for it is not beautiful, nor again for the splendor of the planet, which is of pewter double gilt, but only because being in possession of copies or originals of every deity that *Greece* or *Italy* could boast, he was resolved to have the God of *Persia* to compleat his collection. A poll-tax therefore upon gods and goddesses, be their representation what it will, Suns, Dogs, Moons, or Monkies, is absolutely necessary, and would infallibly bring in a large revenue to the state.

HAPPEN-

HAPPENING to be the other day at *Slaughter's* coffee-house in *St. Martin's Lane*, I saw two very fine statues of *Fame* and *Fortune*, brought out of *Mr. Roubilliac's* gate, and exposed to view before they were nailed up, and carted. The boy of the house told us, they were to be placed upon the top of *Sir Thomas* ——'s chapel in *Hampshire*. “Is it  
“for such as these, observed a sneering papist who stood  
“near me, that crucifixes have been removed, and that re-  
“verend saints and martyrs have been destroyed, and pounded  
“into dust? Is it for these, that *St. Peter* has been broken  
“to pieces, and *St. Paul* melted down into water pipes?  
“Must *Our Lady* make room for *Proserpine*? And the holy  
“giant *St. Christopher* fall a victim to the *Farnesian Hercules*?  
“Will you not agree with me, Sir, continued he, that as  
“men are induced and almost constrained to judge of others  
“by their own manners and inclinations, we who are sup-  
“posed to worship the images of christians, must naturally  
“conclude that the protestants of the Church of *England*  
“worship the images of heathens?” I confess I was at a  
loss how to answer the acuteness of his questions; and must  
own that I cannot help thinking *St. Anthony* preaching to  
the fishes, or *St. Dunstan* taking the Devil by the nose, as pro-  
per ornaments for a chapel, as any Pagan deities whatever.

HITHERTO I have kept you entirely among the molten  
images without doors, but were we to enter the several  
mansions whose avenues and demesnes are adorned in the  
manner I describe, we should find every chamber a pagod,  
filled with all the monstrous images that the idolatry of *India*  
can produce. I will not presume to infer that the ladies  
address *Kitoos* (prayers which the *Japanese* make use of in

time of public distress) to their *Ingens*, but I am apt to surmise, that in times of danger and invasion, some of your fair readers would be more alarmed at the *French* approach to their china than to their chapels, and would sooner give up a favourite lap-dog, than a grotesque chimney-piece figure of a *Chinese* saint with numberless heads and arms. I have not yet digested my thoughts in what manner the fair sex ought to be taxed. It is a tender point, and requires consideration. At present, I am of opinion, they ought to be spared, and the whole burthen entirely laid upon those *Bramins* and *Imams*, whose idolatrous temples lie publicly open to our streets.

*I am,*

S I R,

*Your most humble Servant*

MOSES ORTHODOX.